Quotation and Linguistic Acts

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Short abstract

I will outline a new approach to quotation based on a view of sentence meanings as act types. The approach makes use of Austin's distinction between phonetic, phatic rhetic, locutionary, and illocutionary acts and conceives of quotation as contributing lower-level act types to the meaning of a sentence that do not (just) serve to perform higher-level act types. The approach goes along with a view of the syntax and semantics of quotation according to which pure quotation does not amount to the formation of expression-referring terms, but involves lower-level phonetic, phonological, morphological, or syntactic structures inside the syntactic structure of a sentence at Logical Form.

Long abstract

A number of philosophers (Soames, Hanks and others) have recently argued for a view of sentence meaning based on act types (in order to account for such problems of the unity of propositions and referential opacity). Thus, for Hanks, for example, the meaning of a sentence is composed of referential and predicational act types. In this talk, I will outline a novel approach to quotation that shows a significant further application of such a view. The view makes use the Austinian distinction between linguistic acts of increasingly higher levels: phonetic acts (the uttering of sounds) - phatic acts (uttering of sounds as belonging to phonological, morphological, or syntactic categories) - rhetic acts (utterances for the purpose of conveying conceptual meaning) - locutionary acts (utterances for the purpose of conveying a propositional content) - illocutionary acts (making assertions, demands etc). Ordinarily, such acts are ordered by the 'by'-relation or what Goldman (1970) calls 'level-generation'. I will argue that quotation consists in that lower- level linguistic acts are performed not or not just in order to perform higher-level acts. This approach will be combined with a realistic view of the syntactic structure that should go along with quotation. It promises a unified account of various sorts of quotation, and it arguably is compositional, but in a rather novel sort of way. This has to do both with the novel view of the syntactic structure involved in quotation and the novel view of the contribution of quotation to the semantic composition of sentence meaning based on act types.

Most theories of quotation take pure quotation to consist in the formation of an expression-referring referential term (though theories differ as to how such expression-reference is achieved). I think this standard view is mistaken and I propose a radically different syntactic and semantic analysis of quotation. The standard view predicts the possibility of replacing a pure quotation by an explicit expression-referring term. However, there are several important contexts in which pure quotations cannot be replaced by expression-referring terms:

<u>Binominal NPs / close appositions:</u>

(1) a. the name Obama b.* the name the name of the current president of the US

<u>Predicates in small-clause complements of denominational verbs (Matushansky 2006):</u>

(2) a. John called Mary 'Marie'. b. ??? John called Mary the name Marie.

In these contexts, pure quotations certainly do not have the syntactic status or the semantic role of referential NPs. What is special about both syntactic contexts is that they allow for expressions of whatever linguistic categories in whatever language and even 'mere sounds' (belonging to no particular language):

(1) c. the morpheme 'mer ' d. the phoneme /f/
e. the German word 'Liebe' f. the sentence 'ich liebe dich'

(2) a. She woke [him up]. (preposition) b. She considers [him happy]. (adjective)
c. She called [him an idiot]. d. She called [him 'hoho']. (phoneme sequence)

More generally, it appears that pure quotations can occur in just those few syntactic contexts that impose no linguistic categorical requirements on the expressions that can occur in them. Those contexts also include the subject position of sentences (= SPEC(IP)) (3a-d) as well as the left branch of a compound (4a, b):

(3) a. 'Ka' is an English morpheme. b. 'Pff' is not a nice sound.
c. 'Mary' consists in four letters. d. 'Ich liebe dich' is a German sentence.

(4) a. the 'do not enter'-sign b. the I-language

I will pursue the syntactically most plausible view according to which those syntactic contexts simply accept expressions that are not syntactic units, but may just be morphological, phonological, or phonetic units. The syntactic structure of the overall sentence will then include a part that involves a phonetic, phonological or morphological categorical specification, rather than a syntactic one. The act-based conception of sentence meaning has the significant advantage in that it allows for interpretations of such parts as well, namely as lower-level linguistic act types: phonetic units will be interpreted as phonetic act types, phonological units and morphological units as phatic act types (phonological act types and morphological act types), and lexical items as rhetic act types. Only independent sentences with their syntactic structure at 'Logical Form' will be interpreted as locutionary or perhaps illocutionary act types (which are composed of referential and predicational act types).

The semantic contribution of pure quotations to the meaning of a sentence is thus lower-level linguistic act types. These act types become part of the semantic composition of the sentence meaning by composing with other act types. This is particularly clear with the predicational complements of verbs of calling as in (2a). 'Marie' here will be interpreted as a phatic act type, which will compose with the denominational act that is the event argument of *called.*

In expression-referring binominal NPs (1a, c, d, e), the head noun has the function of mapping a phonetic or phatic act type contributed by the material following the head noun onto the relevant expression type. In concept-referring binominal NPs (*the concept horse*), it will map a rhetic act type onto a reified concept. The same functions apply in the case of pure quotations in subject position (3), on the basis of an overt or implicit sortal in the predicate.

Quoted sentences as in (1f) obviously will be interpreted as phatic act-types, not as locutionary or illocutionary act types. This is because quoted material will never be assigned a syntactic structure at 'Logical Form', the level at which semantically relevant functions and relations are assigned such as 'referential NP' or 'predicate'. This correctly predicts that (pure) quotation of meaning is possible only with lexical items (*the concept horse*), not with sentences (* *the proposition 'Ich liebe dich'*, * *'Ich liebe dich' is a proposition that can be*

expressed in languages) and not with referential NPs (**the referent 'John'*) or definite descriptions (* *the person/referent the president of the US*).

The approach also allows for a straightforward account of mixed quotation:

(5) John said that Mary is 'an extraordinary woman'.

Here *'an extraordinary woman'* is a predicate at LF and thus is interpreted as a predicational act type. At the same time, it retains, in the syntactic structure of the entire sentence, its morpho-syntactic categorical specification. This allows it to be interpreted as a phatic act type that does not just serve to perform the predicational act type, but will contribute a separate component to the meaning of the *that*-clause. If *that*-clauses denote structured propositions, then the contribution of *'an extraordinary woman'* in (5) will be a complex consisting of both the predicational act-type and the phatic act type.

With some further assumptions, the approach also allows for an account of direct quotation:

(6) John said 'I will come'.

In direct quotation, the complement can be shown to be a CP-complement, allowing for an ordinary interpretation at LF. At the same time, though, it provides phatic act types which will also be part of the structured proposition denoted by the CP-complement.